

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7942

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0581

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FROM WOODCOCK

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PFOR, US, VN
SUBJ: SUMMARY REPORT OF PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION VISIT TO HANOI

REF: STATE 061975

1. COMMISSION WAS VERY WELL-RECEIVED IN HANOI AND GENERAL
ATMOSPHERE OF VISIT WAS POSITIVE. ACCOMMODATIONS AND ARRANGE-
MENTS WERE EXCELLENT, AND CONTACTS AT BOTH HIGH LEVEL AND
WORKING LEVEL WERE FRIENDLY, FRANK, AND CONSTRUCTIVE.
COMMISSION MET WITH DEP. PREMIER/FONMIN TRINH SOON AFTER
ARRIVAL MARCH 16 AND HELD PRODUCTIVE TALKS WITH DEP. FONMIN
PHAN HIEN IN MORNINGS OF MARCH 17 AND 18. COMMISSION ALSO
RECEIVED BY PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG AFTERNOON MARCH 17.
DINNER MARCH 17 HOSTED BY TRINH, WHO ALSO ATTENDED
COMMISSION'S RETURN DINNER NEXT EVENING.

2. AS WORKED OUT IN TALKS MARCH 17, CONGRESSMAN
MONTGOMERY AND SEVERAL OF COMMISSION STAFF MET FOR
TECHNICAL TALKS WITH SRV AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR MIA
PROBLEM. SOME ADDITIONAL MIA MATERIAL WAS TURNED OVER
TO SRV AGENCY AT THIS TIME, AND PROCEDURES FOR FURTHER
EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION ON SUBJECT WERE ESTABLISHED.

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3. IN MEETINGS WITH TRINH AND DONG, STRESS WAS ON GEN-
ERAL DESIRE OF BOTH SIDES TO PROCEED TOWARD NORMALIZATION
OF RELATIONS AND TO LOOK TO FUTURE RATHER THAN
PAST. BOTH SRV LEADERS INDICATED SRV WAS WILLING TO
DO UTMOST TO SETTLE MIA ISSUE, AND BOTH ALSO DISCUSSED
AT LENGTH U.S. "OBLIGATION TO HEAL WOUNDS OF WAR" THROUGH

RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. TONE OF MEETINGS WAS FRIENDLY AND DEVOID OF ANTI-U.S. POLEMICS OR EVEN HINT THEREOF. WOODCOCK STRESSED PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO PROCEED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TOWARD NORMALIZATION AND THE IMPORTANCE TO US OF MIA ISSUE IN THAT PROCESS. HE DELIVERED PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO DONG, WHO EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR IT. (ON MARCH 18 DONG PROVIDED A REPLY LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER, WHICH WOODCOCK WILL DELIVER ON RETURN.)

4. AT FIRST FORMAL NEGOTIATING SESSION WITH PHAN HIEN, MARCH 17, WOODCOCK MADE OPENING STATEMENT DESCRIBING COMMISSION'S PURPOSE AND EMPHASIZING PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO MOVE TOWARD NORMALIZATION AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE. WOODCOCK STRESSED THAT MIA ISSUE REMAINS A PRIMARY CONCERN AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT OTHER SIDE UNDERSTANDS THE DIFFICULTY ANY PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE IN MOVING TOWARD NORMALIZATION UNTIL REASONABLE SATISFACTION OBTAINED ON THIS ISSUE. HEN NOTED WE WERE REALISTIC IN OUR EXPECTATIONS OF MIA INFORMATION AVAILABLE AND ASKED FOR MEETING BETWEEN U.S. TECHNICIANS AND SRV AGENCY CHARGED WITH MIA PROBLEM.

5. WOODCOCK THEN STATED THAT COMMISSION WAS IN HANOI TO RECEIVE SRV VIEWS ON NORMALIZATION AND OTHER MATTERS AND DESCRIBED RECENT STEPS TAKEN BY U.S. TO IMPROVE ATMOSPHERE. HE CONCLUDED BY NOTING COMMISSION'S VISIT WAS A FIRST STEP TOWARD A NEW U.S.-SRV RELATIONSHIP AND HOPED THAT FULL ADVANTAGE COULD BE TAKEN OF IT.

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6. AFTER FULL DESCRIPTION OF SRV'S POSTWAR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND PLANS AND EXPOSITION OF SRV FOREIGN POLICY PARTICULARLY IN SE ASIA, PHAN HIEN BEGAN DISCUSSION OF U.S.-SRV NORMALIZATION BY NOTING THAT THE BENEFITS OF IT MUST BE MUTUAL AND THEN GOING ON TO STATE THE "LEGAL," "HUMANITARIAN", AND "RECIPROCAL" BASIS FOR U.S. POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH ACCEPTING ARTICLE 21 AND THEREFORE SRV IS WILLING TO DISCUSS "FORMS AND MEASURES" BY WHICH U.S. COULD CONTRIBUTE TO HEALING WOUNDS OF WAR ON BOTH IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM BASIS. HE MENTIONED SEVERAL IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR FOOD, FERTILIZERS, FARM MACHINES, CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL, AND MATERIALS FOR LIGHT INDUSTRY.

7. FOLLOWING BREAK DURING WHICH WOODCOCK HAD PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH PHAN HIEN, LATTER DISCUSSED MIA'S AND ARTICLE 8B. HE SAID SRV WAS WILLING TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS REGARD WITHIN LIMITS OF ITS

CAPABILITY. HE SAID ALL AMERICANS HELD PRISONER WERE RETURNED, AND ALL AMERICANS WHO REMAINED IN VIETNAM AFTER APRIL 30, 1975 AND "WHO HAD REGISTERED WITH THE AUTHORITIES" HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO LEAVE AND HAD IN FACT LEFT. HE STUCK TO THIS FORMULATION UNDER QUESTIONING BY COMMISSION MEMBER AND PROMISED TO LOOK INTO CASE OF TUCKER GOUGELMANN WHO REMAINED BEHIND IN SAIGON AND HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM. HIEN THEN STATED THAT SRV WOULD RETURN THE REMAINS OF THE 12 U.S. AIRMEN ANNOUNCED AS KIA LAST SEPTEMBER.

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FROM WOODCOCK

8. HIEN THEN MADE SPECIFIC STATEMENT RE SRV POLICY ON MIA'S ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: SRV WILL HAND OVER TO U.S. ALL AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND SATISFACTORILY RESOLVE QUESTION OF THEIR REMAINS. SRV WILL INFORM U.S. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE RESULTS OF FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND SEARCHES FOR MIA INFO. SRV ALSO WELCOMES U.S. PROVISION OF INFO, DOCUMENTS, AND TECHNICAL MATERIAL TO SRV AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR MIA'S. HIEN SAID COMMISSION COULD ASSURE THE PRESIDENT THAT A NEW PROCESS HAS BEGUN FOR SATISFACTORY SOLUTION OF THIS PROBLEM.

9. HIEN WENT ON TO DISCUSS NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, MENTIONING INTER ALIA THE U.S. TRADE EMBARGO AND VETO OF SRV'S UN MEMBERSHIP. HE THEN SUMMARIZED BY REITERATING 3 POINTS OF SRV POLICY WHICH HE HAD DISCUSSED: ARTICLE 21 ON AID, ARTICLE 8B ON MIA'S, AND NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT CONSIDER ANY ONE OF THESE THREE POINTS AS PRECONDITIONS TO THE OTHER

TWO, BUT THEY ARE CLOSELY RELATED TO EACH OTHER. HE CALLED FOR VIEWING THEM ALL IN A BROAD CONTEXT AND APPLYING THEM IN A FLEXIBLE WAY ACCEPTABLE TO EACH OTHER.

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10. WOODCOCK RESPONDED BY REITERATING SENSITIVITY OF MIA PROBLEM TO U.S. AND COMMISSION'S WISH TO GO BACK AND REPORT THAT PROBLEM IS IN PROCESS OF BEING HANDLED. HE SAID SRV STATEMENT RE 12 REMAINS IS REASSURING AND TOOK POSITIVE NOTE OF OFFER OF COOPERATION WITH SRV AGENCY ON MIA'S.

11. IN SUBSEQUENT SHORTER FORMAL SESSION MARCH 18, WOODCOCK SAID THAT FORTHRIGHT STATEMENTS BY HIEN AND PREMIER DONG THE DAY BEFORE APPEARED TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING THE MIA ISSUE BEHIND US. HE NOTED ENCOURAGING RESULTS OF MIA TECHNICIANS' MEETING ESTABLISHING MECHANISM FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS AND STATED WE WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW PROCEDURES AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

12. HIEN ADDED SEVERAL POINTS TO PREVIOUS DAY'S REMAKRS. HE HANDED OVER COPY OF FONMIN TRINH'S 4-POINT POLICY TOWARD RELATIONS WITH SEASIAN NATIONS AND EXPANDED ON THIS. HIEN NOTED SRV-THAI RELATIONS HAD DETERIORATED BECAUSE OF THAI COUP LAST OCTOBER AND SUGGESTED U.S. ADVISE THAI TO BE MORE REASONABLE. HIEN ALSO RAISED "MINOR POINT" OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN U.S., NOTING SRV WOULD BE "GENEROUS" REGARDING THOSE WHO WANT TO RETURN TO VIETNAM OR HAVE THEIR RELATIVES JOIN THEM IN THE U.S., IF THEY PRESENT THEIR CASE IN SUFFICIENT DETAIL. HE ALSO SAID SMALL GROUP OF REFUGEES WHO OPPOSE SRV SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO UNDERMINE GOOD SRV-U.S. RELATIONS. RE AID, HIEN SAID SRV PREPARED TO CONSIDER "EMERGENCY" OR "HUMANITARIAN" AID OR OTHER FORMULA; IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO MENTION ARTICLE 21 AGAIN. SRV PREPARED TO TALK ON TRADE RELATIONS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION ALSO. FINALLY, HIEN PROPOSED FURTHER DIPLOMATIC TALKS IN PARIS IN NEW SPIRIT, AT AMBASSADORIAL RANK OR HIGHER, WITH TIMING TO BE DECIDED LATER.

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13. WOODCOCK AND YOST REGRETTED DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN SRV AND THAI AND HOPED THESE WOULD BE SETTLED PEACEFULLY. RE REFUGEES, WOODCOCK SAID NO SMALL GROUP COULD SUBVERT FREELY-ARRIVED-AT POLICY OF USG. HE PROMISED TO CONVEY PROPOSAL RE TALKS IN PARIS TO PRESIDENT. EDELMAN RAISED MATTER OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION, EXPRESSING HOPE IT WILL SOON BE POSSIBLE FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER RELATIVES TO BE REUNITED WITH FAMILIES IN U.S. WOODCOCK CONCLUDED BY NOTING COMMISSION COULD GO BACK AND SAY SRV HAS MADE A FORTHCOMING STATEMENT ON MIA'S AND WE HAVE DISCUSSED MECHANISM FOR ONGOING ACTION BEYOND SYMBOLIC ONE OF RETURN OF 12 REMAINS. WE CAN REPORT TO PRESIDENT THAT TALKS WERE CORDIAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE AND CONVEY TO HIM DETAILS OF SRV POSITION. PRESIDENT WILL MAKE NECESSARY DECISIONS, BUT COMMISSION POSITIVE THEY WILL BE MADE IN SPIRIT OF HIS LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER.

14. COMMISSION HELD PRESS CONFERENCE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 18 ATTENDED BY LOCAL VIETNAMESE AND FOREIGN PRESS CORPS AS WELL AS ACCOMPANYING U.S. JOURNALISTS. TRANSCRIPT SUBMITTED SEPTEL.

15. REMAINS OF 12 PILOTS TURNEDOVER TO U.S. REPS AT GIA LAM AIRPORT AND LOADED ABOARD COMMISSION'S AIRCRAFT IN BRIEF CEREMONY JUST BEFORE DEPARTURE MARCH 19. COMMISSION SEEN OFF BY PHAN HIEN WHO EXPRESSED CORDIAL FAREWELL.

16. FULL TEXTS OF MEETINGS WITH SRV OFFICIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON COMMISSION'S RETURN TO WASHINGTON. COMMISSION'S OBSERVATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE CONTAINED IN ITS REPORT TO PRESIDENT WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN DRAFT BY THAT TIME ALSO.

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